

Message Text

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16

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSC-05 PA-01

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-10 AID-05 OMB-01 /064 W

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O 091100Z JAN 75

FM AMCONSUL LAHORE

TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE

INFO AMCONSUL KARACHI IMMEDIATE

SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 289

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAHORE 0026

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV PK

SUBJECT: IMMINENT CHANGES IN GOP

REF: ISLAMABAD 0212

1. AS REFTTEL -- EVEN ITS NUMBER -- INDICATES, POLITICAL POT IS BOILING HERE AND IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT IS BREWING. ACCOMPANIED BY PUNJAB GOVERNOR QURESHI, PRIMIN BHUTTO AND PRESIDENT CHAUDRY ARRIVED LAHORE THIS AFTERNOON FROM LARKANA "FOR OVERNIGHT STAY," ACCORDING TO PRESS AND RADIO REPORTS. IN MESSAGE FROM LARKANA, PRIMIN HAS ORDER TV AND, RADIO AND PRESS TO BE PRESENT WITH PHOTO-GRAPHERS TO COVER IMPORTANT "FUNCTION" AT GOVERNOR'S HOUSE TOMORROW (JANUARY 10) AT 9A.M. PLANNED ATTENDANCE OF CHIEF JUSTICE PORTENDS HIGH-LEVEL SWEARING-IN.

2. RUMORMILL HAS BEEN CHURNING PAST TWO DAYS WITH OUTPUT CENTERING ON PROBABLE ELEVATION OF GOVERNOR QURESHI TO "HIGH OFFICE" IN GOP AND POSSIBLE REPLACEMENT BY FORMER PUNJAB GOVERNOR AND CHIEF MINISTER MUSTAFA KAHR. RUMORS CONCERNING QURESHI SEEM PLAUSIBLE IN LIGHT OF LONGSTANDING SPECULATION TO THAT EFFECT. HIS STATURE AS LEADING PUNJABI LANDED CONSERVATIVE
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WOULD BE EVEN MORE USEFUL TO BHUTTO AT CENTER THAN IN

HIS PRESENT UTILITARIAN, BUT SECONDARY, PROVINCIAL POSITION, ESPECIALLY IN COURSE OF BHUTTO'S APPARENT DEVIATION TOWARD RIGHT. BUT HE HAS IMPRESSED US AS MORE SUITABLE AS FIGUREHEAD THAN DECISIONMAKER OR ADMINISTRATOR (E.G., HIS LIMITED SUCCESS IN RUNNING PROVINCIAL FOODGRAIN PROCUREMENT DRIVE LAST FALL).

3. SPECULATION CONCERNING REHABILITATION OF KHAR IS WIDELY THOUGHT TO BE SELF-INSPIRED, ABETTED BY HIS REDUCED BUT VOCAL AND RESOURCEFUL BAND OF BOOSTERS. OBJECTIVE OBSERVERS CONSIDER HIS REAPPOINTMENT AS GOVERNOR, NOMINALLY OVER CHIEF MINISTER RAMAY, UNREASONABLE IN VIEW OF SCANDAL SURROUNDING HIS DISMISSAL LAST SPRING AND OPEN HOSTILITY OF RAMAY AND HIS "CLEAN" ADMINISTRATION TOWARD KHAR. LATTER IS GENERALLY SEEN AS AWFUL YOUNG MAN, LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY: RUTHLESS, UNPRINCIPLED AND VINDICTIVE. IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE HIM PULLING ON WELL WITH RAMAY WHO, DESPITE LACK OF CHARISMA, HAS MANAGED TO RESTORE AURA OF DECENCY, DEDICATION AND HONESTY IN PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION. BUT LOGIC DOES NOT ALWAYS GOVERN PAK POLITICS, AND KHAR EVIDENTLY STANDS WELL IN BHUTTO'S LIGHTS. (KHAR REPORTEDLY HAS ALSO COME TO LAHORE TO BE ON HAND.)

4. INTERESTING, PROBABLY SIGNIFICANT, IS THAT CURRENT RUMORS REVOLVE ONLY AROUND QURESHI, CHAUDHRY AND KHAR, AND POSSIBLE EFFECT ON RAMAY. IN LIGHT OF TIPOFF IN REFTEL, WE THINK LIKELY POSSIBILITY IS ANNOUNCEMENT TOMORROW OF RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT CHAUDHRY AND REPLACEMENT BY QURESHI, RATHER THAN LATTER'S APPOINTMENT TO CENTRAL CABINET AS BRUITED HERE. IF KHAR'S TIME HAS COME, HOWEVER, IT WOULD SEEM MORE LOGICALLY AS CENTRAL MINISTER THAN PUNJAB GOVERNOR, UNLESS BHUTTO HAS DECIDED TO SCUTTLE RAMAY. PRACTICAL FACTOR IS THAT KHAR IS ALREADY MNA, WHILE QURESHI IS NOT AND WOULD NEED NA SEAT VACATED FOR HIS ELECTION IF HE JOINED CABINET.

5. WE AWAIT DENOUEMENT AND WILL ASSESS RESULTS.
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